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Attempt on poet's life: 3 more held

By Staff Correspondent

Three more persons were arrested yesterday for their alleged involvement in the attempt to kill poet Shamsur Rahman.

They are Shahabuddin, son of late Samsul Alam of Mirzapur under Hathazari thana in Chittagong, Maulana Salim Hossain, son of Hafez Samsuddin of Angarbad in Manikganj and Nazrul Islam, son of Golam Basit of Mirpur in Sirajganj, according to CID sources.

They were arrested from their residences by personnel of the Joint Investigation Cell (JIC) and brought to Dhaka yesterday.

Meanwhile, investigators revealed identities of the five, including two foreigners, who were arrested from a madrassa at Uttara in the city on Monday for their alleged link with Harkut-Uz-Jihad, an extremist Islamic group blamed for the attack. Poet Shamsur Rahman was attacked at his Shyamoli residence in the city on January 18.

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6 new envoys appointed

By Staff Correspondent

The government has appointed six new envoys. Two of them are political appointees and four are career diplomats.

Principal Gamruzzaman, an AL Presidium member, has been appointed envoy to Morocco while former president of Netherlands Awami League for 18 years, Mrs Shelley Zaman, has been appointed ambassador to Spain, official sources said.

Three veteran career diplomats have been given ambassadorial appointments. Sirajul Islam, Director General (South Asia), has been appointed envoy to Egypt. Jamil Majid, Director General of the Foreign Ministry, to Japan and Sohrab Hossain, Director General, to the Prime Minister's Office, to Thailand.

Sohrab Hossain will replace Akramul Quader who has been appointed High Commissioner to South Africa.

Shelley Zaman would be the country's third female ambassador. Earlier, Tahmina Khan Dolly was appointed High Commissioner to Sri Lanka during BNP government while Mahmuda Huq from the foreign service served as envoy to Bhutan.

Rashed Ahmed, now envoy to Japan, Syed Mohammad Hossain, envoy to Morocco and Mizanur Rahman envoy to Spain have gone on LPR. Tariq Karim High Commissioner in South Africa, has asked for voluntary retirement. Ruhul Amin, ambassador to Egypt, will be returning to the headquarters.

Hasina leaves for Calcutta today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves for Calcutta on a three-day visit today to inaugurate the prestigious Calcutta Book Fair and receive honorary D Lit degree from Bishwa Bharati University, reports UNB.

Hasina will inaugurate the book fair in the afternoon and deliver a speech. Bangladesh is the theme country of this year's Calcutta Book Fair.

She will also attend the opening ceremony of Bangladesh Gate and Bangladesh Pavilion at the Book Fair.

Inside Today

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Prayer Timings

January 27		
Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr 5-22	5-26	
Zohr 12-45	1-15	
Asr 4-00	4-15	
Maghrib 5-42	5-45	
Esha 7-10	7-20	

Source: Islamic Foundation

Colombian quake kills over 1000

Death toll may exceed 2000

ARMENIA (Colombia), Jan 26: The death toll surpassed 1,000 today from a powerful earthquake that destroyed nearly two-thirds of all the buildings in a western Colombian city, reports AP.

Stunned residents in Colombia's coffee belt chose to wait out the night around bonfires rather than venture back into their crumpled homes following the magnitude 6 quake, which injured hundreds.

The earthquake flattened cities and towns across western Colombia on Monday afternoon, rattling buildings as far away as the capital, Bogota, 225

kilometers from the epicenter.

Hundreds of the dead lived in Armenia, a city of 220,000 residents where entire neighborhoods were reduced to rubble and left without water or electricity, and where residents say relief has been slow to arrive.

Capt. Ciro Antonio Guiza, the city's deputy fire chief, said rescue workers were so strapped that many bodies remained on the streets uncollected.

"There are more than 1,000 dead, perhaps more than 2,000 in Armenia alone," he said.

Hundreds of bodies were trapped in 25 buildings that collapsed, he said. In one 10-story apartment building alone, an estimated 60 people were crushed to death, Guiza said.

Some 700 buildings were destroyed and 180,000 people left homeless in Armenia alone, Colombian Red Cross official Carlos Gilberto Giraldo told The Associated Press.

The injured were being evacuated by air to Bogota, Medellin and Cali, and by road to nearby

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A residential neighbourhood in Armenia, 110 miles, west of the capital of Colombia, Bogota, after an earthquake, which had a preliminary magnitude of 6, tore up western Colombia on Monday, killing over 1000 people. — UNB/AP, photo

Municipal hopefuls defy 18-hour hartal

By Staff Correspondent

Defying an opposition-sponsored hartal across the country yesterday, at least 8,450 nomination papers were filed for the February 23-25 elections in 140 municipalities, according to the Election Commission (EC) till midnight last night.

The deadline for submission was 10 pm, and the EC was compiling statistics till filing of this report at 12:50 last night.

EC officials claimed that yesterday's hartal did not disrupt the process of filing of nomination papers anywhere in the country.

They said there were no reports of non-filing from any of the 140 municipalities going to polls. But reports were still awaited from some of them.

Defying instructions to boycott the polls and threats by their respective parties, a large number of opposition leaders also submitted nomination papers yesterday, opposition sources said. But their exact number could not be known immediately.

The nomination papers will be scrutinised today. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is February 3.

Of the 8,450, a total of 628 filed for chairman while 6,129 for commissioner.

Besides, 1,693 submitted for 441 reserved seats for women commissioners.

The alliance of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and IOJ

enforced the 18-hour shutdown until midnight last night. The opposition parties are boycotting the municipal elections as their four demands including a recast Election Commission with a new Chief Election Commissioner were not met.

The 140 out of 182 municipalities across the country are going to polls. Elections to the rest 42 have been withheld due

to pending cases and other reasons.

A senior BNP leader also admitted that there were examples of defiance "at places".

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, while briefing the pressmen yesterday evening, said there were such instances. But he hastened to add that they would persuade all the candidates including those of the opposition to withdraw from the "farical and meaningless" polls.

Of the municipalities where elections are being held, 38 are in the Dhaka Division, 27 in Chittagong, 39 in Rajshahi, 20 in Khulna and 12 in Barisal.

According to a UNB report:

In Khagrachhari: Eight nominations were submitted for the post of Chairman, 52 for nine ward commissioners and 12 for women commissioner posts despite a preemptive hartal enforced by the BNP-led opposition.

In Barisal: 124 candidates submitted nomination papers yesterday, of whom 24 in Banaripara, 51 in Gournadi and 43 in Bakerganj municipality.

Four candidates submitted nominations for the post of chairman in Banaripara, two in Gournadi and four in Bakerganj pourasava.

In Rangamati: Two candidates submitted nominations for chairman of Rangamati

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Another child has his both hands blown off

2 killed, 300 hurt during hartal

By Staff Correspondent

At least two persons were killed in Jessore and some 300 hurt in clashes involving rival political activists and police during an opposition-enforced 18-hour countrywide hartal that brought normal life almost to a halt.

A third death was a sequel to a pre-hartal incident in Dhaka. The two, both aged around 18, died in Jessore from bomb and stab injuries during hartal hours.

The third, who had sustained bomb injuries on Monday night in Dhaka, later died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

One of the hartal victims was Ripon Mondal, 18, an Awami League supporter. He received multiple stab injuries at Abhayanagar under Jessore district and was dead when brought to nearer Khulna Sadar Hospital yesterday noon.

Ripon along with a dozen others received the injuries during a bloody clash when an Awami League procession came under attack by a rival group at 10 in the morning. The procession was heading for the local election office for filing nomination paper for a party candidate.

The second victim was a hawker named Rajkumar alias Rabi, 18.

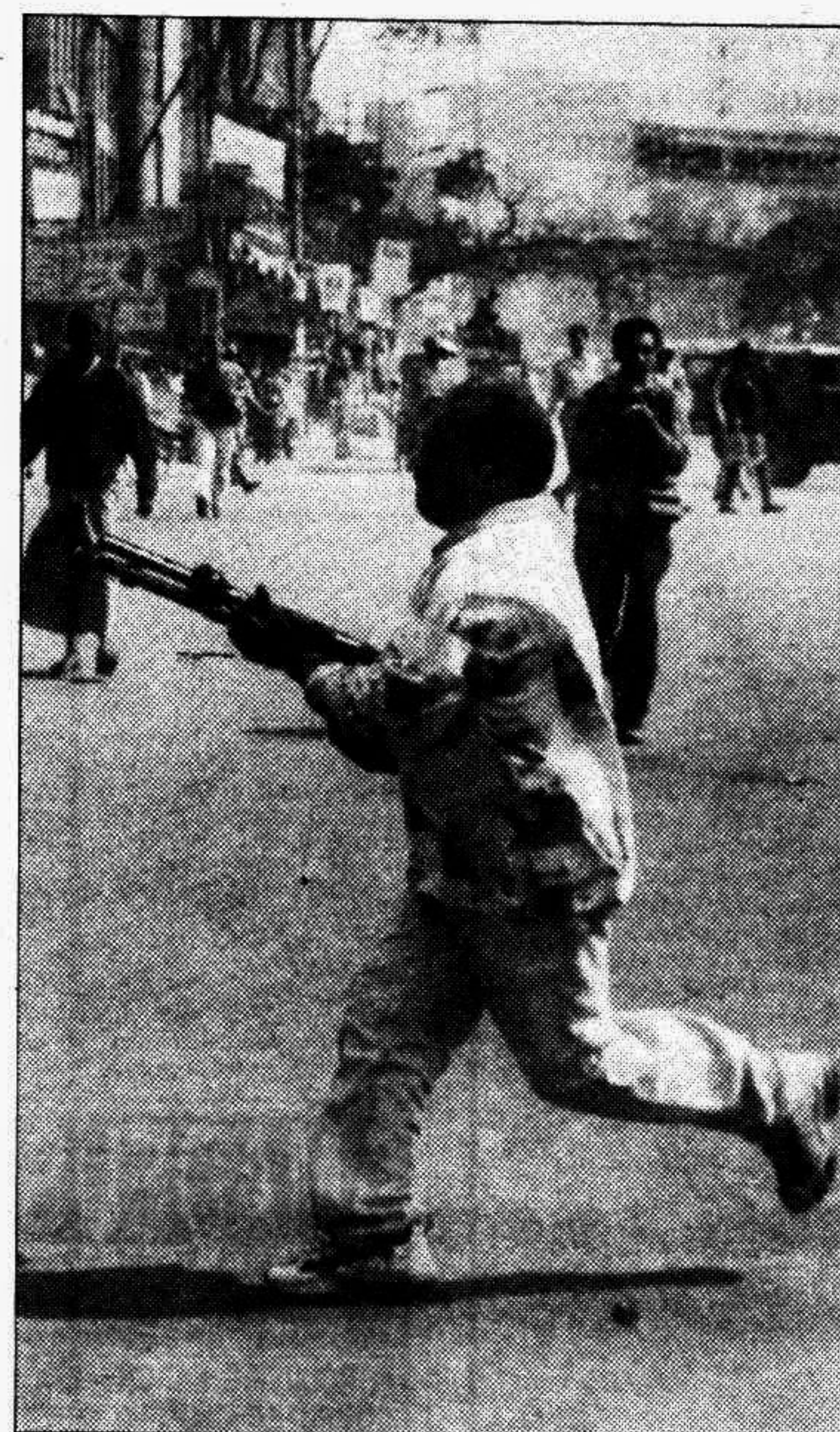
Police said Rabi received injuries from bombs hurled by pro-hartal activists in Jessore town. He later died in the district hospital.

However, the Jatiya Party claiming Rabi as its worker alleged that "armed goons of Awami League" shot him to death.

Police said Mohammad Ali, 30, received injuries at Nababpur in Dhaka on Monday night when pro-hartal activists threw crackers at him. Ali died at DMCH the following morning.

The dawn-to-midnight shutdown, first of its kind, was enforced throughout the country by the BNP-led opposition alliance to press for four-point charter of demands including resignation of Chief Election

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Law lies low

An anti-hartal activist, suspected to be a worker of Haji Selim, an Awami League MP from city's Lalbagh area, charges towards a pro-hartal procession of BNP on Topkhana Road after snatching this shotgun from an on-duty policeman during the opposition-imposed 18-hour hartal yesterday. Has the man been arrested? And the gun retrieved? — Star photo

25 hurt in clash, 20 held

Hartal extended till 2 pm today in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 26: At least 25 people including six police personnel were injured in a clash between opposition activists and police at the entrance of Chittagong court building during hartal today, police and witnesses said.

The injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital and private clinics.

Police arrested 20 people during the clash.

Protesting the police action, the Opposition alliance here extended the hartal period to 2 pm tomorrow in Chittagong.

BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party called the countrywide hartal to foil submission of nomination papers for municipal polls. The Opposition processionists tried to enter the court premises to foil submission of nomination papers for election in Patiya.

The opposition alliance alleged that police fired bullets on the processionists but police denied it and said they lobbed the tear gas shells to disperse clashing opposition activists.

Police said the trouble began at noon when processionists of Jamaat-e-Islami became unruly and tried to enter the court building defying police restriction.

The Jamaat processionists backed by BNP and Jatiya Party activists pelted brick bats and threw cocktails at police.

Police said they resorted to

lathicharge and fired tear gas to chase away the opposition activists.

The Opposition alleged that police attacked the processionists and fired bullets without any provocation.

Security has been tightened in the port city as tension mounted after the clash.

Normal life was disrupted here due to hartal, marked by sporadic blasts of cocktails, police and witnesses said.

Trucks loads of police and BDR were deployed at all important points of the city.

In Chittagong port, delivery of goods remained suspended though partial cargo handling took place inside the jetties, port sources said.

Shops and markets remained closed and offices functioned with thin attendance.

All kinds of vehicles except few rickshaws stayed off the roads during the hartal period.

Opposition supporters held rallies and brought out processions on different city roads.

Meanwhile, three nomination papers for chairman, 12 for commissioners and one for woman commissioner were submitted till 4 pm today for contesting Patiya municipal polls, official sources said.

The nomination papers were submitted at the office of the District Returning Officer at Chittagong court building.

Bhuiyan confirms Bangabhaban bid

By Staff Correspondent

BNP did not entertain a presidential plea for joining parliamentary session on Monday after failing to get any firm commitment regarding CEC's resignation, the party secretary general confirmed yesterday.

Referring to a Daily Star report yesterday on the President's attempt, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told newsmen last night that the Military Secretary to the President had phoned him at 2 pm Monday to convey a proposal.

"The proposal was that schedules for municipal polls would be deferred provided we withdrew our 18-hour hartal programme and joined the session when President addressed the parliament," Bhuiyan said at a press briefing in the city.

On behalf of all opposition partners he had proposed that at least one of the Opposition's four demands should be met with immediate effect, Bhuiyan said.

"We asked for an announcement that Chief Election Commissioner would resign. But, as President could not entertain our proposal, no breakthrough was achieved," said Bhuiyan.

The Daily Star was the lone newspaper that broke the story that a presidential bid to strike a deal